



The Greenlandic Self-government prioritizing of oil and mineral exploration and heavy industry challenge the local communities adaptability and increases vulnerability

Hendriksen, Kåre

Publication date:
2011

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

Citation (APA):

Hendriksen, K. (2011). *The Greenlandic Self-government prioritizing of oil and mineral exploration and heavy industry challenge the local communities adaptability and increases vulnerability*. Abstract from The International Polar Year 2012 Conference, Montréal, Canada.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

The Greenlandic Self-government prioritizing of oil and mineral exploration and heavy industry challenge the local communities adaptability and increases vulnerability

Kåre Hendriksen

*Department of Management Engineering, Technical University of Denmark, Lyngby, Denmark;
and Department of Development and Planning, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark*

The Self-government of Greenland established in 2009 is heavily depended on the grant's from Denmark that contributes with app. two thirds of Greenland's public finances. In the wish to become economical independent of Denmark there is an increasing focus on exploration of minerals and oil and on heavy industry based on hydropower. To utilize these potentials for economic growth the Self-government has initiated a cooperation process with a series of large multinational companies. The core question is how this focus interacts with the traditional Greenlandic occupational profile and the lifestyle connected to the distributed settlement pattern?

In the internal Greenlandic discussion it is often stated that the distributed settlement pattern and especially the small settlements cause high expenses, and that this part of the population is a burden for the public economy and thereby the society. Based on quantitative statistic and accounting based analyses of the economy related to the settlement pattern this paper proved that this topic is much more complex. Some of the smaller settlements contribute positively to the national income others are more or less self sustained based on the subsistent economy from hunting and fishing. Finely some depend on economic support. It is also documented that the majority of the larger settlements defined as towns during the last decades has lost their economic foundation which was based on catching and processing fish and shrimps.

In an attempt to optimize the fishing fleet by economic measures it has been centralized to larger units and the exports of unprocessed fish and shellfish to low wage countries, carrying out the processing before export, have been increasing – a process that at present accelerates. Although the local populations often are able to adapt to climate change and exploit new seasonal fluxions and species, these developments leaves a series of the economic reasonable well function smaller settlements without proper basis for commercially viable activities and survival.

Trusting that heavy industry and oil and mineral extraction can absorb the redundant labor from the subsistence activities and local economies and create economic growth the Self- government installs economic and other policies leading to a further centralization of the population.

There is not necessarily consistency between official political statements and the implemented measures. On top of this the population in smaller settlements has no frame or means to understand the impact of the discussed and applied interventions. They are therefore to some extent left behind and are not included in contemporary developments leaving them with a feeling of being powerless.

Based on more than 130 qualitative interviews with inhabitants in 24 settlements the local population's adaptability and resilience to handle these dramatic transformation processes is discussed.